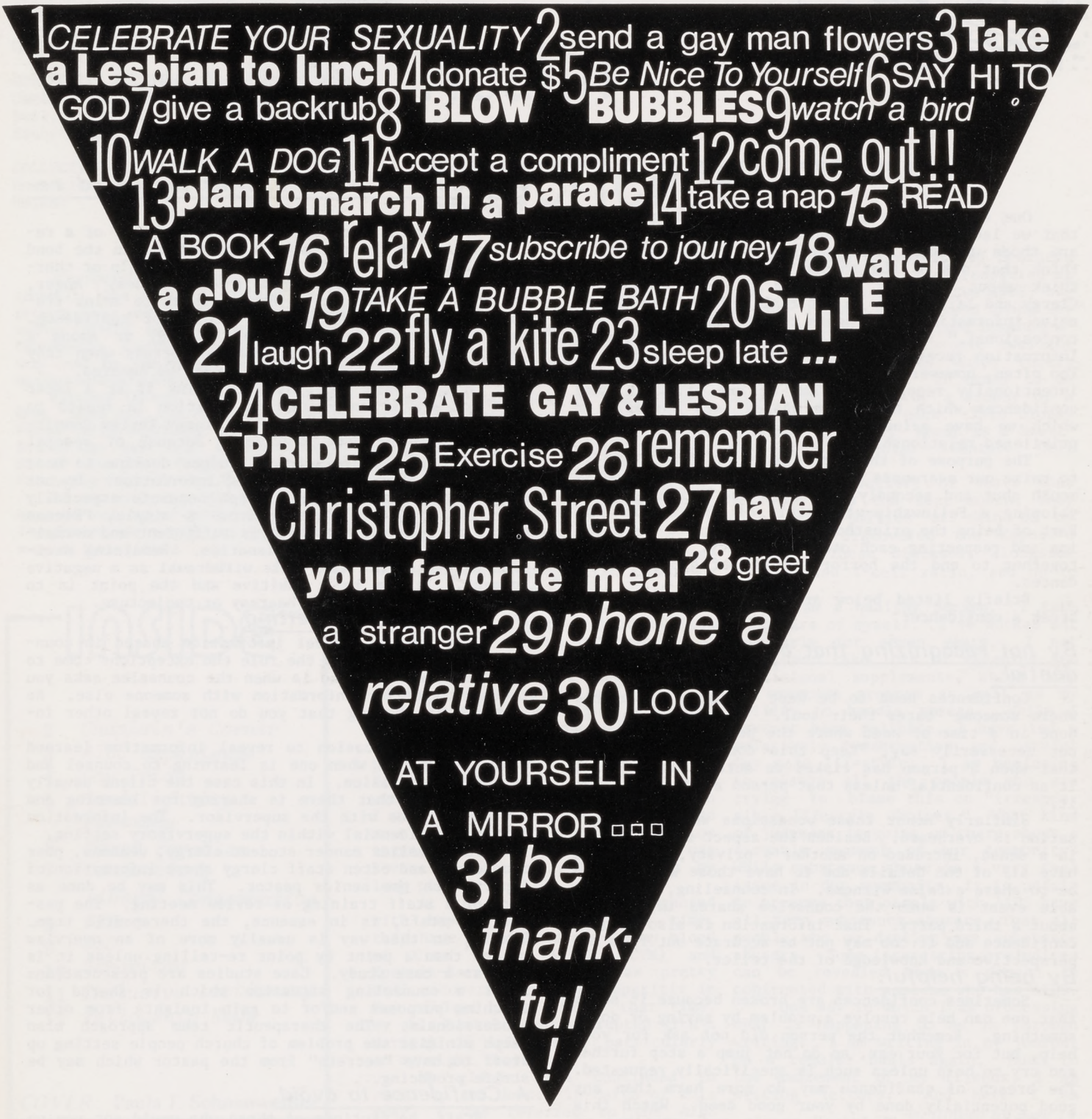
JUNE

journey
JUNE 1984


1 CELEBRATE YOUR SEXUALITY 2 send a gay man flowers 3 Take a Lesbian to lunch 4 donate $ 5 Be Nice To Yourself 6 SAY HI TO GOD 7 give a backrub 8 BLOW BUBBLES 9 watch a bird 10 WALK A DOG 11 Accept a compliment 12 come out!! 13 plan to march in a parade 14 take a nap 15 READ A BOOK 16 relax 17 subscribe to journey 18 watch a cloud 19 TAKE A BUBBLE BATH 20 SMILE 21 laugh 22 fly a kite 23 sleep late ... 24 CELEBRATE GAY & LESBIAN PRIDE 25 Exercise 26 remember Christopher Street 27 have your favorite meal 28 greet a stranger 29 phone a relative 30 LOOK AT YOURSELF IN A MIRROR □□□ 31 be thank-ful!

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

by Nancy Radclyffe

Collective Writer and Senior Chaplain

CAN YOU KEEP A SECRET?

One of the more painful realities about MCC is that we lack an ethic of confidentiality. Yes, there are those who keep confidences very well, however, I think that one of the things we have not stopped to think about is when one needs to keep a secret. Clergy and laity alike do not realize how often we receive information which needs to have the "seal of the confessional." We may do better in this regard with information received in a formal counseling setting. Too often, however, we do injury to one another by not intentionally recognizing that we are privy to many confidences which have been shared less formally or which we have gained accidentally or because of a privileged relationship.

The purpose of this article is two-fold. One is to raise our awareness of when one needs to keep one's mouth shut and secondly, to begin the process of developing a Fellowship-wide ethic of confidentiality. Part of being the priesthood of believers is recognizing and respecting each other's privacy. Let us join together to end the horror stories of broken confidences.

Briefly listed below are ways in which we may break a confidence:

By not recognizing that a sharing is confidential.

Confidences need to be kept in those situations where someone "bares their soul." Frequently this is done in a time of need where the person sharing does not necessarily say, "Keep this confidential." Know that when a person has risked we automatically treat it as confidential unless that person asks us to share it.

Similarly honor those occassions when a conversation is overheard. Besides the aspect that one has, in a sense, intruded on another's privacy, we may not have all of the details and to have those we have may be to share a false witness. In counseling, a comparable event is when the counselee shares information about a third party. That information is also held in confidence and it too may not be accurate but from the perspective and knowledge of the teller.

By being helpful.

Sometimes confidences are broken because it seems that one can help resolve a problem by saying or doing something. Remember the person did not ask for your help, but for your ear, so do not jump a step further and try to help unless such is specifically requested. The breach of confidence may do more harm than any good potentially done by your good deed. Watch this carefully, we are "helping" people and sometimes we help too much.

By failing to honor a prior privileged relationship.

Confidences once shared in the intimacy of a relationship, in the privacy of counseling, in the bond of colleagiality, in the trust of a self-help or therapy group, etc. always remain confidences. Anger, distrust, goal seeking or not stopping to think frequently give rise to a later breach of confidence. What was shared by two student clergy or among a church staff especially in times of stress when they bolstered one another needs to always be honored.

On this same line, stop to think if at a later date you are in an evaluative position in regard to one of these people such as on a Clergy Review Committee or Board of Home Missions. Because of special knowledge one is prejudiced. Judges decline to hear cases where they have privileged information. Do not assume that the two can be kept separate especially when the prejudice is negative. A simple, "Please excuse me from this review;" is sufficient and normally requires no further explanation. Remaining decision makers do not take this withdrawal as a negative comment. It may be a positive and the point is to evaluate on merit not on hearsay or conjecture.

In the counseling setting

One does not reveal information shared in counseling! Having stated the rule the exceptions come to mind. The obvious one is when the counselee asks you to share specific information with someone else. Be cautious in sharing that you do not reveal other information as well.

A second occasion to reveal information learned in counseling is when one is learning to counsel and is under supervision. In this case the client usually has knowledge that there is sharing for learning and review purposes with the supervisor. The information is kept confidential within the supervisory setting.

In a similar manner student clergy, deacons, peer counselors and often staff clergy share information of import with the senior pastor. This may be done as part of a staff training or review meeting. The pastor and staff, is in essence, the therapeutic team. Sharing in this way is usually more of an overview rather than a point by point re-telling unless it is done as a case study. Case studies are presentations about a counseling situation which is shared for teaching purposes and/or to gain insights from other professionals. The therapeutic team approach also helps minimize the problem of church people setting up staff to have "secrets" from the pastor which may be strife producing.

A Confidence to avoid

Staff, be cautious of those who would set you up

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journey

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COVER: **Paula J. Schoenwether**

AIDS
A Gay Man's Health Experience

by Steve Pieters,
Clergy on Staff, MCC-VALLEY

This week they told me that I have Kaposi's Sarcoma. I didn't really believe the dermatologist when he told me. Two days later, I began to believe it, when my hematologist confirmed the report. Both doctors told me not to worry about it too much. After all, I already have been diagnosed with cancer of the lymph glands, and there is really nothing that can be done for either cancer at this point.

I am a thirty-one year old Gay male clergyperson of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches who has AIDS. This was confirmed with the diagnosis of KS this week. I first noticed swollen glands under my jaw two years ago, while I was still pastor of MCC Hartford, and District Co-Coordinator of the Northeast District.

I left the Northeast and moved to Los Angeles in November of 1982. I was beginning to experience persistent skin problems. In February of 1983, I got very sick with severe flu-like symptoms. When I went to see the doctor, one of the more renowned AIDS physicians in Los Angeles, he said my immune system was severely deficient, which began my long period of "AIDS anxiety."

At the time, I was diagnosed with hepatitis. Since that time, they have found evidence in my blood of Cita Megalo Virus (CVM) and Epstein-Barr virus. I was pretty well recovered from the hepatitis in May of last year. Since that time, my skin has constantly erupted with a variety of infections, particularly on my right foot.

My glands have continued to swell up and down. In March of this year, I was referred to the AIDS clinic at the University of Southern California. There, they reassured me that I probably didn't have AIDS, but another disease being found among Gay men: Pesistent Generalized Lymphodenopathy. This is a chronic swelling of the lymph glands which rarely develops into AIDS. In order to be sure, they had to do a biopsy of a lymph gland in my neck. This biopsy revealed a cancer known as a Small-Cleaved Follicular Center Cell Lymphoma.

In the battery of tests that followed over the next month, they biopsied a portion of skin on my foot, and discovered the Kaposi's Sarcoma. These diseases, alongside my reversed T-cell ratio, add up to AIDS.

I am a healthy person. I take good care of myself. I've worked out regularly for seven years. I eat well, and take lots of vitamins and nutritional supplements, which help my exercise program as well as my ability to handle stress. While I haven't been celibate, I have led a relatively conservative and careful Gay male lifestyle. I am beginning to resent all the people who are trying to blame this on "irresponsible lifestyle choices." What kind of judgment is going on there about a sizeable segment of our community? While substance abuse is a very real issue in our community, it is unfair to presume that people with AIDS have all been substance abusers, that all people who go dancing are substance abusers. Some interesting prejudices can be revealed when a person is confronted with someone who has AIDS.

One way in which I am processing what is happening to me is through writing. I am writing in my journal on a regular basis again. Much to the amazement of my friends, I am writing letters. And here I am

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CELEBRATE GAY & LESBIAN PRIDE

GAY PRIDE CELEBRATIONS AND CREATIVE MINISTRIES

by Troy Perry
Moderator, UFMCC

Fourteen years ago, in 1970, the American Gay and Lesbian community started celebrating Gay pride week to commemorate the Stonewall riots that took place in 1969, a year before. Here we are 14 years later celebrating not just the riot that took place in New York City where some Gay men, most of them in drag, stood up against police oppression in New York City, but also celebrating what is good about our lifestyle.

MCC's have always been at the forefront of this early celebration. I was one of the founders of the Christopher Street West Committee (our Gay Pride Week Committee) in Los Angeles. I know MCC pastors and laity who were at the forefront of groups to see that Gay Pride Celebrations were held all over America and around the world.

In many cities, local congregations of the UFMCC design and build floats as a way of letting the larger Gay and Lesbian community know we exist. Many of our groups use floats to get out the message of the good news that we will not be robbed of our spirituality. I am delighted when I hear people tell me that the best float in thus and so parade was entered by MCC. One of our churches (Houston, TX.) involves itself not only in the annual parade in that city, but also has made their sanctuary available and are an integral part, with other Gay religious organizations in that city, of planning a National Day of Remembrance for all of those who have lived and died in the struggle for Gay and Lesbian rights.

Ministry is very important to our churches during that weekend of the year when we celebrate Gay and Lesbian Pride in hundreds of cities all over the world. In Los Angeles several of our churches have come together to sponsor a worship service

Mixed Blessings

Coyp Allison

I'VE GOT THE WHOLE PARADE LOST! I TURNED DOWN THE WRONG STREET...

on our Gay pride carnival grounds the morning of our parade for all the individuals who have worked all night at the carnival grounds as well as the exhibitors who feel they can not leave the grounds even to watch the parade. The response has been fantastic!

One of our Church groups at a Gay Pride Celebration flew in Ernestine Cantu, a member of our church in Fort Worth, TX., to their city and made her a part of their Country/Western theme. When you like country/western music, all Country/Western radio stations throw in gospel music. The Gay Pride Committee in that city accepted her as a country/western singer who specialized in Gospel music. She drew crowds of up to 3000 people as she sang in both English and Spanish and testified of her involvement with MCC.

We have an opportunity to witness to thousands of people once a year in our respective cities if we will just take that opportunity. It's a shame sometimes when I hear our people talk like modern-day pharisees about why they don't involve themselves in Gay pride celebrations. Sometimes I think some of our people have become spiritual snobs and we fail in this opportunity to lead people to Jesus Christ by not participating and letting people know we exist.

MCC Washington, DC, sets up a booth at its celebration and gives away free lemonade. Everyone who gets a glass of lemonade also gets one of the most attractively printed leaflets I've seen. The pamphlet explains about who MCC is and why MCC is giving the lemonade free, using the story of the woman at the well and explaining how Jesus gave her water that was living so that she would never thirst again.

In all of the above cases I have mentioned I have had people testify that they found MCC because of our involvement and our creative ministry during Gay Pride Week. It is our opportunity again this year to say to a large community that God loves them. We have the opportunity--let's use it and let's celebrate Gay pride in 1984!

candLeLighting ceremony

FOR FELLOWSHIP MEMORIAL SUNDAY

The last Sunday of June is designated as Fellowship Memorial Sunday in the UFMCC Calendar of the Church Year. In the midst of our celebrations of Gay/Lesbian pride, we observe a solemn memorial for Gay/Lesbian martyrs. We remember especially the pastor and members of MCC New Orleans who died in the New Orleans arson of 1973.

The following candlelighting ceremony was developed by the Rev. June Norris, pastor of St. John's MCC, Raleigh, North Carolina. There should be four candles on the altar; they will be lit just prior to Holy Communion.

The First Candle Is Lit

The first candle is in memory of the 33 Gay and Lesbian persons who lost their lives in a fire in New Orleans in 1973. These early MCC'ers were upstairs over a bar when the place was firebombed. Because of who they were, many churches in that city refused to allow funeral services to be conducted in their sanctuaries.

Second Candle Is Lit

The second candle is in memory of all who wore the pink triangle during the regime of Adolph Hitler. These were the people whose lives were taken because this one man wanted to annihilate all traces of our community. We do not know how many of our people died, but we do know that six million Jews were also destroyed during this time.

Third Candle Is Lit

The third candle is for all who have died with AIDS. We are praying for healing for those who are now afflicted and for a cure so that others will be healed.

Fourth Candle Is Lit

The fourth candle is in memory of all who have lost their lives simply because they were Gay or Lesbian: for our sisters who were burned as witches; for our sisters and brothers who have been attacked and killed by "queer-bashers;" for those who took their own lives; for those who are on a path of self-destruction because they have believed the lie, "God doesn't love you."

Long ago in ancient Israel the prophet Jeremiah was praying to God for the Israelites who were in captivity.

He was remembering the place called Gilead where medicinal herbs and plants were grown and used by the physicians of that time. Extractions called "balm" were used to heal the people. Jeremiah prayed, "God, hear the cries of your people. Is there no balm in Gilead?" We who are the forgiven sons and daughters of God can answer that question of Jeremiah. Yes, there is a balm in Gilead.

Song: "There Is a Balm in Gilead" (by soloist or choir).

stay connected

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to be bound by the seal of confidentiality when the information shared needs to be addressed by the pastor or someone else. You may be forewarned of this impending conflict by the body language and intensity of the request for confidentiality. A request like the following should trigger a warning sign in you: "I need to share something with you but you must promise to not tell the pastor." Avoid the pitfall of this kind of confidence seeking. One response might be, "Your intense concern about this tells me that the pastor is just the one with whom you need to share this. She/he is really a good listener. If it would help I will be glad to go with you." If all else fails try saying, "I do not feel that I can promise to keep what you will share as a confidence from the pastor. So, if that is the condition, please do not tell me."

Action toward an ethic of confidentiality

Each on of us needs to intentionally make a decision to be aware of confidences to be kept and then to keep them. If you know you have a propensity to "spill the beans" then do some conscious work on this area. A therapist may be able to help you understand why you cannot keep a secret and then help you develop ways to do so. As with any of our "weak spots" God is a ready partner in helping us to become new creations. God knows how to keep confidences and can certainly provide the means for us to do it too.

Reporters will go to jail rather than breach the confidentiality of their source. Professional therapists, social workers, psychiatrists stake their reputation on the ethic of confidentiality. Priests know and highly value the sacred trust of the confessional whether or not the sharing occurs in a little booth. MCC clergy and laity can be as willing to go to jail to protect a confidence as to defend human rights. We, too, can stake our reputation on our ethic of confidentiality and keep the sacred trust of the confessional.

THREE PARABLES

Illustrations of I Corinthians 13
by Chris Glaser
Collective Writer

I. "God loves you! I love you!" The television preacher remembered pronouncing these words for the millionth time into the fleshless eye of a television camera as he had concluded his 889th broadcast of his syndicated program humbly entitled "Hour With God." He now stood in the inner office of his 10th floor executive business suite overlooking the Christian university built in his name. His organization was responsible for the founding of 138 new churches in the United States and 28 foreign missions, as well as 22 radio stations at home and abroad broadcasting Christian music and the preacher's eloquent words in 14 different languages, a kind of modern day Pentecost.

Despite his success, he looked with envy through a picture window at the students strolling on the walkways below. He remembered his own college days. And he remembered that it was when he was himself a college student that he had had his only experience of the unconditional love he preached every day in the studio sanctuary three floors below. It came from a fellow student, Jeff George. The preacher whose name later would become synonymous with "Praise the Lord" could never fathom Jeff's abiding love. No matter how he let Jeff down and no matter what was troubling him personally, Jeff George exuded love, a non-possessive, non-demanding, non-judgmental love.

"What was his secret?" the preacher wondered as he remembered how unconvincing he felt whenever he said "I love you" to his invisible audience behind the camera lens. "How do you love a damn television camera?" the preacher questioned the air, disgust in his voice. "How do you love people or God?" he asked himself. "Here I have given everything I am and everything I have to bring people to God and I don't love anyone as Jeff loved me." As he dried his watering eyes, a telegram slipped from his hand onto the floor. It read: "Dear Rev. Preacher. Stop. Jeff George died today after prolonged illness. Stop."

The bitter irony for the famous preacher who wished to love as Jeff had was that Jeff George was not a Christian.

"If I speak in the tongues of human beings and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing."

II. The old man sat on a park bench remembering his friend Sharon. Sharon was the best friend he ever had. Sharon had believed in him. When others doubted he would ever make it, Sharon encouraged him to build his dream. But parts of his dream were not always in his best interest, and Sharon would caution him, lest his dream become a nightmare. Yet Sharon never insisted that he should do it her way, and never grew impatient with him. The old man remembered: other friends became jealous of his success and arrogantly denounced his work, yet Sharon rejoiced at his accomplishments and humbly endured like criticism for her belief in him. And Sharon also endured when the now old man failed to appreciate her fully. "Thank God for Sharon," the old man sighed, smiling at the memory.

"Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist in its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

III. Her friend was dying, and she did not want to be with her. She didn't know why. Fear of her own death. Fear of the pain of losing someone close to her. Fear of watching her slowly pass away. "She has so many talents," she complained to herself or perhaps to God, "so knowledgeable, speaks seven languages, a modern day prophet who speaks out on all the major issues of the day. A happy, successful woman." She pushed her out of her mind.

A month later, on a tour of India, in the city of Calcutta, she became disturbed when she found a city tour she was taking would visit Mother Theresa's Home for the Dying. She felt immensely uncomfortable and anxious at the discovery. She sarcastically remarked to a friend on the trip, "Sally, do you think Mother Theresa's a saint?" And as she

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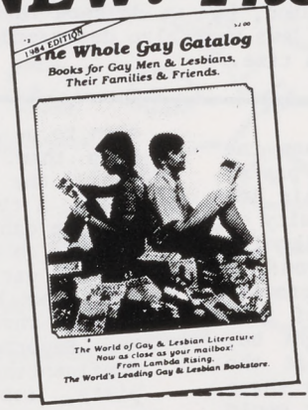
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CONNECTION

by Ravi Verma
Director of Administration

An area that has received considerable attention in the last decade is "Organizational Development." It is a discipline that explores the growth phases and changes an organization goes through in its life (analogies to what the book "PASSAGES" says about an individual's life.)

It explores the different strategies in terms of resource allocation, structure, management style and staffing that are needed in each stage. It serves as an excellent analytical tool to study the past, manage the present and to plan for the future. Based on empirical research, several models have been developed for an organizations growth phases and several diagnostic tools have been developed to explore what phase an organization is in currently and how to then plan for the future growth cycles.

This is a field of great interest to me and one which is of particular importance to UFMCC at this stage in our history. It can also be used to look creatively at the life of a single congregation or even a district in UFMCC.

It is my belief that in time of change in our environment (culturally, socially, politically, economically) and our own extremely rapid growth, it is imperative that all of us intentionally do some kind of long range planning, dreaming, and envisioning at all levels in our Fellowship. The methodology of organizational development can be a very useful tool in planning for the future.

Our Fellowship is 16 years old and it is 16 years to the 21st century! We are at the mid point and now is the time for us all to plan for the TWENTY-FIRST Century!

GSS has been involved in what organizational structure will best meet the future needs of UFMCC. The Board of Elders, at their next meeting, will be studying and discussing some organizational growth models to assist them in doing some future and long range planning about UFMCC.

I know in some districts that have started this kind of planning and several individual churches have laid some very ambitious and creative long range plans.

I will be, from time to time, sharing with you about new ideas and developments in the field and some of my personal long range plans as Director of Administration. I am interestd in hearing your ideas, resources and criticisms.

What Is Liberal Conservative?

by Bob Arthur
Pastor, MCC Birmingham

One of the accusations frequently flung at me is that I am a liberal conservative. Many times I have asked people what they mean by that, and I have had so many different explanations that it is amusing. So with this article I would like to explore its meaning.

The best place to begin a study is usually with a definition of terms. But in this case, that is rather difficult. These two words, liberal and conservative, mean many different things to different people. So let me share my own understandings.

Conservative is a label used to describe a person who is resistant to change and follows tradition. It can be applied to both politics and theology. Liberal is a label used to describe a person who agitates for change and breaks tradition. It can be applied to both politics and theology. Unfortunately it seems that many people stereotype individuals by their politics or theology, and do not see how anyone can be a combination of liberal and conservative in various aspects of life. Yet many people are conservative in theology and liberal in politics, or vice versa.

I believe that a person's politics should be outside the realm of theological categorization. I realize that many times a person's theology will influence his/her politics, but they need not necessarily be called by the same label. Perhaps, at this point, I need to define what I mean by the word politics. Politics is the attitude and method of interaction with other people. A liberal politician would therefore be tolerant of change and differences, and a conservative polititian would not be tolerant of change and differences.

With these definitions, the stereotypical liberal is one who advocates new theological ideas, and is quite tolerant of other people's ideas. A conservative is one who holds fast to orthodox theology and has no tolerance for others' ideas. Yet in practice I find that within

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entered the building no larger than her own church, she muttered under her breath, "I don't know why we have to see this!" Entering the doorway her gaze fell on rows of dying men, young and old, on clean beds, cared for by young volunteers from Australia alongside the sisters of the order. Through a hallway she found a similar scene of dying women, young and old. She was surprised to feel a sense of peace in this place, a sense of dignity, and yes, a caring and care-full love.

"We bring them off the streets," a sister told her, "so they may die with dignity. They are Hindu and Muslim and Jain and Sikf and Christian and Jew. No matter their faith, they have a right to die in a home of love."

As the woman heard this, she suddenly considered her dying friend. She had pushed her out of her mind and heart into the streets. With an effort, now, she tried to bring her back into her own home of love: her own heart, her own mind, her own prayers. She eagerly awaited her return home to her friend, so that she might know she had a home to go to in her heart.

"Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

FFO

UFMCC's Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order

SOURCES OF AUTHORITY FOR THEOLOGY

by Sherre L. Boothman
Dean, Samaritan

Theology is "knowledge of God and the supernatural; religious belief, especially when methodically formulated." [1] When discussing our knowledge of God, issues of authority are the "how do you know what you know" types of questions. We all develop our theology from the sources of knowing that we trust or give authority.

Traditionally, theologians have defined three sources for doing theology: the Bible, church traditions, and experience of individuals and communities. Some choose to add reason to this list as unique to other forms of experiencial knowing. Different theologies usually give one or another of these sources primacy. This means that if the sources do not agree on an issue, one is made the final decision maker.

An example of this is the pre-Vatican II Roman Catholic theology which made traditions of the church primary. No theological stance could be in contradiction with the tradition. Most Reformation protestant theologies have assigned the primacy to the Bible. Groups that put emphasis on the work of the Spirit, such as Quakers, have traditionally held experience to be primary. Liberation theology, which originated with the Black slavery experience in the USA, tends to begin with the experience of oppression and brings questions from this experience to the Bible and tradition.

These are the basics. Originally, I wrote this paper as a resource paper for FFO. I volunteered to write it because I thought the confusion in the theological discussions of FFO in Toronto were, in part, due to individual assumptions around authority issues. To do theology, we need to be clear about our assumptions in this area.

For me, the sources of authority are ultimately interactive. When we do theology, we find them in conversation with each other. Our "primary" authority, I believe, is usually determined by our question. This diagram visually demonstrates what I am explaining.

Experience The Bible

GOD

Church Traditions

God is the ultimate authority. Three ways of knowing God are the Bible, tradition and experience. Theological process usually starts with a question. For example, Rev. Elder Troy Perry had a question, "Could people be homosexual and Christian?" From his experience as a Gay man in his own relationship with God, the answer was yes. He then took the question to the Bible and again the answer was yes. More and more Biblical scholars are beginning to agree. Not until Boswell's research did we have the historical data that also confirmed a strong yes from church tradition.

When we look closely at the three sources of authority, what we find are people living out their lives trying to be faithful to God in their own historical, social, philosophical, cultural and literary context. The Bible is, for the most part, the stories of the faith community at different times searching for God's will and word in their lives.

Tradition is the story of the church doing the same thing. Our experience is our search in our own lives. The sources of authority actually are our conversations with the faith communities through recorded time. This is very important to me because I believe our God to be the God of history, and that God has remained faithfully with us and for us in creation. I believe we find both the brokenness and the faithfulness of the faith community in their stories and in their ideas about God and God's will.

What is extremely important to me is that we can always find God's hand of resurrection, of healing, of God's desire for justice and wholeness in human community.

Sometimes we find God's voice the loudest in what is not said, what is absent from the story. Many times these silences are referred to as the "lost" histories. The silence of women, of Gay men and Lesbians, of ethnic and racial minorities, and several others. Sometimes it is a matter of digging deeper, listening more carefully to the voices, and questioning the silence.

In terms of women, it is usually the absence of information. For example, Huldah was the woman prophet whose prophecy set off the Deuteromic Reform, the largest internal social and economic reform in the history of the Jewish nation. The story of Huldah appears in II Kings 22. She appears from nowhere and vanishes after this story. When the high priest under King Josiah finds a scroll in the temple, Josiah has to know if it is truly the word of God.

He has the high priest ask Huldah. What is not said is that Jeremiah was in Jerusalem at the same time. Why did the King trust Huldah's prophecy about the word of God more than Jeremiah's? To be the prophet responsible for such extensive reforms and to find silence about her is dramatic to say the least. Huldah sparked the reforms Jeremiah cried for and yet today it is Jeremiah and not Huldah whom we know as a great prophet.

The silence around racial and ethnic minorities is a phenomenon of Western Christianity's tradition of interpretation. The tradition is basically that we do not mention the fact that virtually all people in the Bible are people we now call third world people. They are members of the Western world's racial and ethnic minorities: Jews, Arabs, Africans. In fact, the only obvious white people in the Bible are the Romans. Moses was married to an African woman.

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UFMCC's Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order

SOURCES OF AUTHORITY FOR THEOLOGY

by Sherre L. Boothman
Dean, Samaritan

Theology is "knowledge of God and the supernatural; religious belief, especially when methodically formulated." [1] When discussing our knowledge of God, issues of authority are the "how do you know what you know" types of questions. We all develop our theology from the sources of knowing that we trust or give authority.

Traditionally, theologians have defined three sources for doing theology: the Bible, church traditions, and experience of individuals and communities. Some choose to add reason to this list as unique to other forms of experiencial knowing. Different theologies usually give one or another of these sources primacy. This means that if the sources do not agree on an issue, one is made the final decision maker.

An example of this is the pre-Vatican II Roman Catholic theology which made traditions of the church primary. No theological stance could be in contradiction with the tradition. Most Reformation protestant theologies have assigned the primacy to the Bible. Groups that put emphasis on the work of the Spirit, such as Quakers, have traditionally held experience to be primary. Liberation theology, which originated with the Black slavery experience in the USA, tends to begin with the experience of oppression and brings questions from this experience to the Bible and tradition.

These are the basics. Originally, I wrote this paper as a resource paper for FFO. I volunteered to write it because I thought the confusion in the theological discussions of FFO in Toronto were, in part, due to individual assumptions around authority issues. To do theology, we need to be clear about our assumptions in this area.

For me, the sources of authority are ultimately interactive. When we do theology, we find them in conversation with each other. Our "primary" authority, I believe, is usually determined by our question. This diagram visually demonstrates what I am explaining.

Experience The Bible

GOD

Church Traditions

God is the ultimate authority. Three ways of knowing God are the Bible, tradition and experience. Theological process usually starts with a question. For example, Rev. Elder Troy Perry had a question, "Could people be homosexual and Christian?" From his experience as a Gay man in his own relationship with God, the answer was yes. He then took the question to the Bible and again the answer was yes. More and more Biblical scholars are beginning to agree. Not until Boswell's research did we have the historical data that also confirmed a strong yes from church tradition.

When we look closely at the three sources of authority, what we find are people living out their lives trying to be faithful to God in their own historical, social, philosophical, cultural and literary context. The Bible is, for the most part, the stories of the faith community at different times searching for God's will and word in their lives.

Tradition is the story of the church doing the same thing. Our experience is our search in our own lives. The sources of authority actually are our conversations with the faith communities through recorded time. This is very important to me because I believe our God to be the God of history, and that God has remained faithfully with us and for us in creation. I believe we find both the brokenness and the faithfulness of the faith community in their stories and in their ideas about God and God's will.

What is extremely important to me

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The entire Old Testament is about the Jewish faith community. Jesus and his disciples were Jewish. The Bible was written by third world people and is about, for the most part, third

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Government Structures & Systems

by Jackie Walker
Chairperson, Commission on Laity

Government Structures and Systems met in Kansas City, MO., on March 15 to 19th. I have been participating in GSS since the summer of 1980. I have always been impressed with the way GSS works together. For me this meeting was even more impressive. We not only worked together to accomplish our task, but also I felt that we really were able to hear one another. We listened to our brother from Australia, The Rev. Jim Dykes, talk about the problems our present structure causes in Australia. We brought forth concerns we heard in our own Districts and on the floor of General Conference.

We have made some adjustments in the document that was presented at General Conference. The adjustments were in keeping with the UFMCC Theology and Vision as well as what we had heard from people of the Fellowship. You will be receiving copies of the new document at your District Conference. We also hope to present more about the document to you in future issues of Journey.

I am including in this article a copy of the theological statement that GSS drew up. We felt that before we could get into the actual structural changes that we needed to be guided by the vision and theology of the Fellowship. We discussed some ideas and visions that we share as representatives of this diverse Fellowship. Rev. Judy Dahl, Rev. Brenda Hunt, and Rev. David Pelletier put our ideas, visions and theology into written form. We are using this theological statement as a part of GSS's new proposal.

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We are in journey, looking for that which enables more, empowers more and emphasizes more directly our legitimacy in understanding ourselves as gifts of God's presence. Government, structures and systems serve our ministry and our individual and collective responding abilities. As an ecumenical body, given the grace/gift of unity born from the power of the life-giving Spirit of God, we celebrate our unity in our understanding and God's action. In our ecumenism, we acknowledge our diversity and live out our unity through the forum we have chosen and into which we have been called.

As a eucharistic body, we receive as a sacred trust from God the gift of unity to which we are called. As an evangelical body, we give of ourselves and our gifts; collectively and individually to the common good of the world; a world called to new life, new values and new relationships one to another. We are ecumenical; responsive to sharing in the vast display of faith traditions. We receive God's blessing in our eucharistic privilege and pass those gifts on in the practice of evangelical ministry.

To these ends our govenment, structures and systems reflect our living witness to the power that calls us to be and to become the presence of infinite love on the earth and in our lives. Our government, structures and systems enable us as individual congregations, groups of congregations and all of us together to perform the bigger and broader functions of service in order to facilitate our further growth, the further proclamation of the truth of our being and the sharing of the vision of a new humanity. As we grow, our government, structures and systems must continue to accomodate our roots as an ecumenical, eucharistic and evangelical collection of followers of the Christ, binding themselves together in order to accomplish our greater task (Matthew 28:19). We are a community of faith, gathered to be God's people in ministry with one another as we follow Christ Jesus.

UFMCC is a New Testament church, kerygmatic, Spirit-filled, co-creating with God; an understanding of ourselves, whereby our focus for ministry is to enable one another to recognize and share our individual diversity of gifts to magnify the realm of God. We are structured with an understanding which places emphasis on the individual relationship to God, celebrating our differences in unity.

We choose people to serve in a variety of capacities based on their individual gifts, responsibilities, convictions, trust; and in the leading of God's Spirit empower them to serve in these positions. We embody Christ's Spirit in our lives and in our churches. We live in the conviction of covenant and grow with openness to God's Spirit.

In this Spirit, we offer our gift to you.

+ In nomine Jesus +

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Samaritan GAY & LESBIAN PRIDE

LET MY PEOPLE GO!

by Sherre Boothman
Dean, Samaritan

Then God said, "I have seen the affliction of my people...I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them..."
(Exodus 3:7-8a RSV)

Our God moves to deliver us! For MCC's, Gay Pride Day celebrations are truly acts of praise for God's actions on behalf of our liberation!

This month we march through the streets of our cities testifying to the world, as did Moses, Miriam and Aaron so long ago, that God's Word to the taskmasters is, "Let my people go!"

This message of God, as the Liberator of all oppressed peoples, rings in our ears down through the ages. It calls us out to march, to speak, to live with courage in the face of our taskmasters...and our taskmasters have taken many forms in this last year.

The National Council of Churches question whether or not God's call to the faithful to be in loving community really has to include UFMCC. Jerry Falwell says that the angels will rejoice at our annihilation. Rev. Elder Don Eastman is stabbed in Dallas. The needs for security measures are discussed at Clergy Conference in Kansas City during the Elders' Sharing.

I must tell you that I have done a lot of thinking about courage these last few months, primarily because I have been afraid. That is not easy to admit to you. I do not like the way fear feels, or myself when I am afraid. Striking the balance between reasonable safety measures and getting paranoid has taken more of my time than I care to admit. I think we all try very hard not to think about how vulnerable we really are. As trite as it sounds to us now, truly courage is going on with our ministries in the face of our own fears.

Suddenly the Exodus story takes on new meanings. There were Egyptians who wanted Moses, Miriam and Aaron dead. The closer the Jews came to liberation, the more willing the taskmasters were to be violent. The climax, of course, is the parting of the Red Sea as the Egyptian chariots were about to run down the ex-slaves. This is a prime example of the Jewish understanding of miracle: the right thing happens at the right time in the right place.

This we must remember about God as Liberator. Our Christian education programs must help our future leaders to understand. Some of us may get hurt, but the Word of our God of history is liberation for all the oppressed. By the Word, will and grace of the God of history, it will happen!

As we lock arms around the world let us truly walk with pride in who God created us to be; walk with pride in our God who will liberate us all. The Word has been spoken; "Let my people go!"

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CONFERENCE

The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches and Dignity International are pleased to announce that they have decided to hold simultaneous international conferences in Ft. Lauderdale/Miami, July 19 - 26, 1987. Saturday, July 25th will be a day of joint celebration and prayer for the two largest organizations that touch the lives of Gay men and Lesbians around the world.

Other religious organizations that provide positive ministry to Gay and Lesbian people will be invited to hold their conferences at the same time and to join with us for this historic event.

A joint UFMCC/Dignity press conference will be held on Thursday, May 24, 1984, at 10:00 a.m. in the Garden Room at First United Church of Christ at:

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UFMCC - Mr. Ravi Verma - (213) 464-5100
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Mr. Adam DeBaugh - (301) 585-3330

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MCC, many liberal theologians are just as intolerant of conservative theologians as conservative theologians are of liberal theologians. Does that make them conservative liberals? Since I have acquired a teaching method for Samaritan that is quite tolerant and encouraging of all brands of theology, even though I personally am quite orthodox in my own, does that make me a liberal conservative? If this is what people mean by their accusations, I am quite happy to accept them.

But the question remains, why are we so dependent upon using labels? After all, we are all claiming to be Christians, and as far as I know, most MCCer's believe that the only important theological fact is the experience with Jesus Christ. All other theological issues pale in comparison to this one central event. Why then all the fuss about categorizing ourselves and trying to persuade, dissuade, or disgrace those whose specific theological perspectives differ from our own? Labels can only cause us trouble, as we so proudly proclaim when we talk about sexuality labels. Why then is there any difference in theological labels?

Inclusive Lectionary

AN OPEN LETTER TO:

The Inclusive Language
Lectionary Committee
Division of Education and
Ministry
National Council of Churches of
Christ in the U.S.A.
475 Riverside Drive, Room 704
New York, NY 10115-0050

FROM: Dr. Jeffrey Pulling,
Dean of Samaritan Extended
Studies, West Hartford, CT

Thank you for preparing An Inclusive Language Lectionary: Readings for Year A. It is a valuable resource for the Metropolitan Community Churches, the denomination that I serve as an educator and consultant. Our Fellowship of churches is committed to the use of inclusive language in worship and church, and that includes the reading of Scripture. Your lectionary readings provide consistent and sound renderings of the Scripture passages assigned for each week of this church year. Please know that your efforts are appreciated in this part of the Body of Christ.

Since you call your volume of readings provisional and experimental and you ask for feedback, I feel free to give you some constructive criticism. Note that these suggestions come from someone who supports what you are trying to accomplish. I feel horribly about all the negative press stories that accompanied (and preceded) the publication of your volume, the inane barbs of church colleagues who are not committed to inclusive language in the first place, and the threats against your lives. I for one would like to congratulate you for standing your ground and moving ahead with your work. I do have some suggestions, however, for your future translations of Scripture passages into inclusive English.

My primary concern about An Inclusive Language Lectionary is that you seem to always translate words the same way no matter what context in which they appear. The meaning--incon-text of "Father" is not always "God our Father and Mother." Depending on the context, "Father" can be accurately translated as "Provider," "Source," "Giver," "Parent," "Maker," or "Creator." "The Father" suggests the more impersonal and formal rendering of "God," whereas "Father" or "my Father" in direct address or prayer could be rendered as "Beloved God" or "Loving God."

The use of "Sovereign" for "Lord" is a good, non-sexist way tc point out the majesty and ruling power/authority of God and of Christ Jesus. "LORD" as a translation of "YAHWEH" did not have this purpose, however. It was a way to avoid saying the proper name of God aloud. If we choose to not use the name "Yahweh" so as not to offend Jewish brothers and sisters, then how about "Adonai" or just "God" at times?

"The Human One" for "Son of Man" sounded jarring to me at first, but it has grown on me. You are certainly right that this is actually a more accurate way to translate this idiom. I am wondering why you did not use the same logic for "Son of God" and render it "The Divine One" or "the One of (from) God." Using such titles as "the One of Humanity" and "the One of God" will actually help us theologically to talk about who Jesus is without getting caught up in a literal understanding of father-son (or parent-child) metaphors. You have already heard from several of your detractors that using "Child" or "Son" when referring to Christ smacks of immaturity, and I suppose that is partially true. I like using "Child" in such places as John 3:16, but in other places "heir" might be more appropriate.

The use of "Realm" for "Kingdom" is only sometimes accurate in my opinion. As you point out in your Appendix, "Kingdom" in the Bible "refers primarily to the exercise of royal authority and power, and secondarily to the area over which such rule is exercised." So why use an area term like "Realm" in every instance? How about "Dominion", "Reign", or "Rule"?

I applaud your translation of "brethren" into various terms depending on the circumstance: sisters and brothers, friends, or neighbors.

The use of "gloom" for "darkness" is an excellent choice because "gloom" has the negative connotation needed without inferring that blackness is scary or bad.

Using "they," "them" and "their" as singular pronouns is not only recognizing a shift in proper English to inclusive pronouns but it also reflects the way we usually speak anyway.

Thank you for your ministry of imparting the inclusive Word of God to us. I hope that you will be able to use the positive suggestions in this open letter and those in the responses of others who believe in the importance of your task. I look forward to Readings for Year B and Year C.

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our journey

NEW WORSHIP COORDINATORS FILL PULPIT AT TRINITY MCC

Rev. Phillip Eberle and Rev. Richard A. Matera began their appointment as the new worship coordinators of Trinity Metropolitan Community Church, New York, on April 1. God has richly blessed both Phil and Richard with so many small miracles as they moved to New York City. When they moved from Providence, RI, an apartment was waiting for them, something practically unheard of in New York City today. Two members of MCC Providence, Bill and Steward Counts, helped Phil and Richard move. When it came time to turn on the utilities, no deposit was required. Even the telephone company did not require a $200.00 deposit!

Both Phil and Richard are working in a team ministry. They have been in relationship for four years and have ministered as a team while student clergy in Providence. The concept of team ministry is exciting as it offers the congregation the diversity of talents and time of two people and the possibilities for outreach and programs are greater with two people working as one. The team ministry of worship coordinators is also a witness to relationships and the uplifting of Gay and Lesbian couples.

Rev. Richard A. Matera, Nastasha and Rev. Phillip Eberle

DISCOVERY THROUGH CONNECTING IN THE SPIRIT
Northwest District Women's Retreat, 1984

by Jeri Lee-Hostetler
MCC Portland

Excitement churned inside me as we joined the traffic flow on I-5, heading south from Portland to Salem. From there we would turn east and follow the Mackenzie River Highway, then over the Santiam Pass to Camp Tamarack and the 1984 Northwest District Women's Conference. The sense of anticipation was awesome.

And then it hit me: what if I was expecting the impossible? I spent the rest of the drive toying with the frustrating idea that I might be disappointed. How could anything follow last year's retreat?

Something could. In fact, something did.

We arrived--my spouse, BJ; my daughter, Dinah; and I--just before 5 p.m., in the midst of light snow flurries that were to continue through most of the weekend. But if the weather was cold, the Spirit was warm. As women continued to gather through the night and on into the next day--there were 181 of us registered--the sense of warmth and love and community increased. The theme of the conference was "Discovery Through Connecting," and we were really connecting--with God, and with each other.

The conference was planned and hosted by the women of MCC Seattle. Ephesians 4:3 served as a theme: "Make every effort to preserve the unity which has the Spirit as its origin and peace as its binding force." And that theme found voice in the song, "Women of the Spirit":

> Women in the spirit
> Women of the spirit
> Women with the spirit
> Sing we hallelu.

It was that song that began the first worship service on Friday night, and ended the last one, on Sunday. From the moment I heard all those wonderful voices lifting that song to God, I knew that disappointment was not part of the program for that weekend.

Following worship on Friday evening, we celebrated with a dance and social hour. My mind leaped irresistably backward in time, to the preceding year and the first time I had ever danced with BJ. Then it was back to the present to greet new arrivals as they plunged through the door and into the lodge, shaking their heads: "The roads are bad. Praise God we made it." We warmed them with hugs and praised God with them.

After the dance, the three of us trudged up the hill in the cold and the night, where we found our tiny, six-bed cabin and crawled into our sleeping bags. Outside, the mountains and the tall firs wrapped their light blanket of snow around them. Inside, I was cold all night. It didn't matter. I added a down vest to my layers of clothing and whispered over and over into the night, "I'm so glad I'm here."

Morning comes early for me, usually around 6:00, and retreats are no exception. By 6:30 I was into my sweats and running down the dirt road that lead north from Camp Tamarack. I had no company but the tracks of two other runners in the snow. That time alone with God and the mountains was an important part of the weekend for me, but by 8:00 I was ready for people again. Back in camp, I showered and changed and headed for a breakfast of hot cereal, sausage and pancakes; good food is one of the many blessings we found at Camp Tamarack.

The rest of the day moved quickly. At morning worship, Rev. Delores Berry of MCC Portland sang me into ecstasy with "We Need to Hear From You," then carried me higher still with a sermon about Christ imagery.

After worship, there were workshops. Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson presented "Basic Concepts of Women's Theology." Some of that workshop I will remember because I took good notes. But other things I will remember because they seem to be written somewhere inside me: "We need to celebrate who we are." "It is important to explore how my life as a Lesbian affects my view of God and my understanding of the Church." And that wonderful quotation, "I saw God in myself, and I loved Her fiercely."

After lunch I attended a workshop by Rev. Lucia Chappelle of De Colores MCC in Los Angeles: "Women's Music." She talked about her process of writing new words for old songs. "There is power," she said, "in reclaiming those songs for ourselves." The experience of singing such "reclaimed: songs with a group of women can be awesome if one is ready for it. I was ready; it was awesome. I don't think I will ever be quite the same.

Later in the afternoon there were three workshops to choose from. There was "The Healing Touch," by Ginger Antrim. Paula Schoenwether

did one called, "Adult Daughters of Alcoholics--Hope and Recovery." I chose the third, "Goddess Worship," by Frodo Okulam of MCC Portland, and rejoiced with her again in the story of her faith journey and her relationship with Christ.

After dinner, we moved into another worship service, a women's liturgy. Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson challenged us to touch the hem of Christ's garment--and hang on--in the face of the impossible situations in our lives.

But Saturday was not all workshops and worship. Evening became a showcase for some fine talent in front of the fireplace. Like the rest of the weekend, the talent show had some totally memorable moments: Frodo Okulam played a foot-stomping fiddle, while members of the audience headed for the dining area to do some foot stomping. Nancy Wilson presented her tongue-in-cheek magic show, including the marvelous "disappearing foot act." Ginger, from Seattle, sang "Gethsemane," and I wept, not so much at the magnificence of her presentation, as at hearing a woman claim the right to sing the role of Jesus Christ. And what does one say about a woman who does impressions of inanimate objects, and ends up clinging to the fireplace like a barnacle? That's what Ellen Davis from MCC San Francisco did.

We were still laughing as we followed the beam of our flashlight back to the cabin.

When we woke in the morning, I felt the beginnings of a wistful sadness. Women's Retreat, 1984, was almost over.

There was some singing left.

There was a very special sermon by Rev. Candace Naisbitt of MCC Seattle. "I started out like a worm," she said. "But I'm going through metamorphosis." Me, too. And that sermon was part of it.

There was a baptism. I shivered, just watching the four candidates walk out into that icy lake. I shivered even more when they went under. But I left with a sense of completeness and rejoicing for their courage in following Jesus Christ, even there.

There was a business meeting. Then lunch. Then clean-up.

It was over. "How do I go back?" I kept thinking that same thing as we loaded the car and turned away from Camp Tamarack. But already I know the answer. I would go back by taking it all with me. In the deep places of my spirit, where I really live, I will never forget.

We are women in the spirit...of the spirit...with the spirit. The miles that separate us can never destroy what happened at Camp Tamarack.

14TH ANNIVERSARY AWARDS DINNER AT MCC SAN FRANCISCO

All of our sisters and brothers of the Bay Area MCCs were warmly invited to the joyful celebration of the fourteenth anniversary of MCC San Francisco. The ANNUAL ANNIVERSARY-/AWARDS DINNER was held at the Upper Market Basque restaurant CAFE DU NORD. The program included the annual clergy awards for distinquished ministry to members of the congregation, as well as delightful entertainment.

On Sunday morning, April 29th, the service was in celebration of the anniversary.

Having meals together was important sharing time for women who attended the Northwest District Women's Retreat.

DISTRICT CONFERENCE UNITED KINGDOM AND WESTERN EUROPE

Moving Worship.....informative and inspiring workshops..hospitality. That was the scene for 50 or more people from MCC's London, Birmingham, Bournemouth, Liverpool, North London, Middlesborough and Denmark when they met in Bahlam, South London for an enjoyable and successful UFMCC weekend conference, on April 6.

After the initial service on Friday night we eagerly anticipated the workshops the following day - "Prayer" led by Jenny Marley, "Inclusive Language" by Rev. Elder Jean White and a shortened version of Rev. Bob Arthur's "Homosexuality and the Scriptures." The afternoon also provided the opportunity for sharing groups for women and men.

The "no talent" contest later that night had us splitting our sides with laughter, and warm memories were evoked of Rev. Nancy Wilson's magic act almost a year ago in the same building during MCC London's Operation Resurrection.

Altogether, it was a spirit-filled weekend for many. Lives were touched and fresh commitments made. It will be surprising if new works do not grow out of this weekend.

PHILADELPHIA CITY COUNCIL INVITES MCC CLERGYPERSON TO PRAY AT MEETING

Rev. Joseph Gilbert, pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Philadelphia, recently was called upon to lead prayer with the Philadelphia City Council at the invitation of Councilman Ed Schwartz. According to Scott Wilds, Legislative Aide to the Councilperson, and incidently the only openly Gay Aide in the city, Rev. Gilbert's prayer was the first non-sexist prayer in the history of that Council. Gilbert is a recent appointment to the Mayor's Commission on Sexual Minorities.

Rev. Joseph Gilbert

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A GAY MAN'S HEALTH EXPERIENCE

writing for a more public audience. I want to write something that might be helpful to others who have AIDS, and something that might be useful to people who want to help people with AIDS.

As I have looked around the bookstores in the last year, and as friends have piled me high with books to read, I have found nothing on the experience of having AIDS, particularly spiritual or theological reflections. With my experience as a pastor and a hospital chaplain, perhaps I can write something that would be meaningful to some people. If nothing else, writing a book gives me a goal! And I am sure that I will benefit on a personal level, for I learned a long time ago to write about my experiences and feelings, in order to learn from them and grow.

So what am I experiencing and feeling? I've been on a roller-coaster of feelings. When the doctors first told me that I had a terminal cancer, I reacted in what I thought was a reasonable and controlled manner. I insisted on driving home myself, even though my hospital companion offerred to drive. (I have learned to take a friend with me to the hospital for out-patient procedures.) When we got to my home, I called about five different people. I reached five different answering machines. By the third machine, I was leaving messages that stated in thirty seconds or less that I was dying of cancer, and would appreciate a call sometime.

My friend's lover came over, and the Rev. Nancy Radclyffe, chaplain to the UFMCC clergy, came over. I fell apart. I sobbed while Nancy and my other friends held me. I was so scared of falling off that precipice and really feeling all those things this news meant I would feel. And as I worried about it, I fell off, into that abyss, feeling all the fears I had been scared to feel before the diagnosis. I let go, and cried about feeling guilty, as if I had brought this on myself. I sobbed out my feelings of abandonment, loneliness and resentment. I grieved over things I haven't done, the things I have missed. I realized suddenly that everything was changed forever now. Nothing will ever be the same. I worried that I would never get a good night's sleep again. I even let myself feel the fear that now I will never have a lover. Who would want me? I'm damaged merchandise, I felt. I have AIDS. All the negative, destructive feelings and fears came pouring out. And my friends held me and rocked me, and let me feel all those feelings. They reassured me and supported me, as I fell and fell.

As I fell, I realized God's presence in a powerful and new way. The doctors told me the worst they could tell me. They confirmed my worst fears. And life went on. That night, as friends gathered around me, we watched "I Love Lucy" and "Poltergeist." We had a major summit meeting on ordering just the right pizza. I took great delight in serving big bowls of ice cream. We hugged and cried and laughed.

All those Kubler-Ross feelings are real: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. I've already experienced some of each of these. Ah! Blissful denial! Denial has gotten a bum rap; denial can be a blessing: a real relief from indescribable psychic pain. I've never had much comfort or ease with expressing or even identifying my anger. It's there now, and it jerks out of me once in a while. Bargaining can be fun. And productive. When I work out at the gym, I can push more and more weight as I bargain with God over my life and health. Depression is a real part of this experience too, but I feel that I don't have time to be depressed. So when I feel it, I do something about it. I call a friend, I find something to laugh at, I meditate or do relaxation exercises. Acceptance is something I hesitate to feel. It feels too much like giving in.

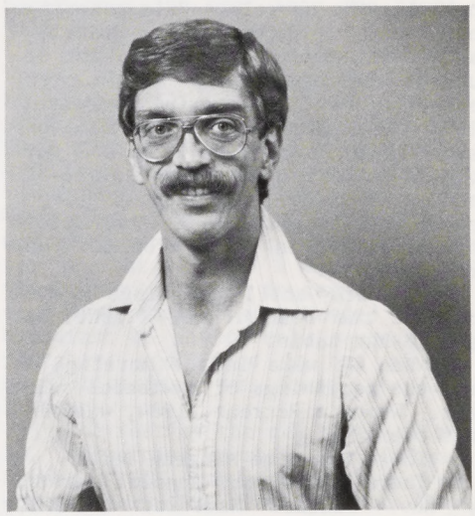
Narrowing this experience down to five feelings is too simplistic. On the other hand, anything that makes this experience more manageable is good.

The reactions of the people around me have been amazing. I'm very grateful for my pastoral skills; friends and family have been falling apart quite a bit lately. And I'm really grateful I know so many good ministers, lay and clergy. I am really grateful to be a part of UFMCC. This is a good place to be when something like AIDS happens. People from all over the country and the world have gathered around me in a variety of ways. UFMCC has been the Living Body of Christ for me.

There have been people who can't deal with me right now. It's quite an experience to have people be scared of you. Some people act angry with me. There are people who bleed all over me. Then there are the ones who treat me as if I'm already dead: "Thank you for all you were in this Fellowship." Somebody wise told me early on in this experience that I have to allow people their reactions to my news. And so I try to understand, and I hope that they too are trying to understand.

One thing that I would like people to understand is that I don't want to think of myself as dying. I want to think of myself as living. Living with AIDS and realistically facing my mortality, but living. I want to tell my friends, "Talk with me. Communicate your feelings about this. Let me communicate mine. And let me have other identities besides "a person with AIDS. Let's laugh together, let's enjoy life right now, let's be together and do together as time and energy allow."

We believe in a God of life. That means that life goes on, even in the face of death. It means that we can face our deaths, our mortality, and still go on dancing and enjoying our friends. It means to me that I believe in fairies, in magic, in healing and miracles! It means that we are a people of hope, even when that hope is as nonsensical as tap dancing. As a fool for Christ, I can say, "The doctors told me I have AIDS. But I'm still dancing. I'm still hoping."



Steve Pieters

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JERRY FALWELL SAYS:

"Look at the Metropolitan Community Church today - the Gay Church - almost accepted into the World Council...National Council of Churches. Almost. The vote was against them. But they will try again and again until they get in. And the tragedy is that they would get one vote. Because they are spoken of here in Jude as being brute beasts - that is going to the baser lust of the flesh to live immorally and so Jude describes this as apostasy. Thank God this vile and satanic system will one day be utterly annihilated and there will be a celebration in heaven."

From a Sermon on the TV Program "Old Time Gospel Hour" by Rev. Jerry Falwell, President, Moral Majority.

TROY PERRY SAYS:

No, Jerry, that's not what Metropolitan Community Church is like because

We are a caring, loving group of people.

We have created a 60-minute television documentary to confront those kind of lies, and others made by people like you who preach that we, as Lesbians and Gay males are brute beasts, not people.

Our documentary portrays the lives of women and men in the Gay community praying for and struggling to secure freedom and liberation for all people...teachers...Cuban Refugees...Third World People...persons with AIDS...Gay parents...the churched and unchurched...youth and seniors...sisters and brothers around the world who seek peace and prosperity. We have shared on tape the truth that spirituality and sexuality are compatible.

Mr. Falwell, I am asking my friends for help to show it like it is. I am asking them to please send their tax-deductible donations to me to get this message on the air. And it will be on the air because my friends care.

GOD, GAYS & THE GOSPEL: THIS IS OUR STORY. A television presentation of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

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